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Washington Scene

Fingers Will Shake in California

By George Dixon

MY CENTRAL Intelligence Agency spy that I planted in the Interior Department sent me a coded message yesterday that Secretary Stewart L. Udall is about to tour California with a finger-shaking burlesque that he believes may laugh Richard M. Nixon right out of the Governorship.



Dixon

Secretary Udall looks not unlike Buster Keaton, and plans to emulate the old silent-film comic in a deadpan travesty, but without the custard pies. The Cabinet officer is perfecting a shake-the-finger-in-the-face takeoff of Nixon, which he performs with preternatural gravity.

It's a howl. By sheerest accident I was privileged to catch a preview.

JUST RETURNED from a 10-day visit to the Soviet Union and Premier Nikita Khrushchev, Secretary Udall spent his first night out at a party for Democratic faithful at the suburban Maryland home of House Majority Whip Hale Boggs. The extensive Boggs garden overflowed with chivalry and beauty, among the latter being two with the improbable first names of Ladybird and Ymelda.

Secretary Udall appeared with his lovely wife, Lee. After much circulating, they gravitated to a select group dominated by Postmaster General J. Edward Day and Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy of Minnesota. I just happened to be a few feet away—you know how those things are.

Postmaster Day asked his fellow Cabinet member about the invitation Khrushchev extended to Udall to shake his finger in the Russian's face.

"Yeh," laughed Udall. "They were going to take photographs of us, and Khrushchev said, 'If it will help you out, you can go ahead and shake a finger in my face.'"

"If it will help you out," echoed the Postmaster General. "I wonder if Khrushchev had anybody in mind?"

"I wouldn't be surprised if it was that former Vice President—what's his name?—who is accusing Pat Brown of being soft on communism," offered Senator McCarthy.

THE GROUP reminisced about Nixon's trip to the Soviet Union when he was Vice President and how he made so much of shaking his finger in Khrushchev's shakable face.

"Do you suppose Nixon did it on invitation?" asked an unidentified member of the group.

Udall shrugged. Then he began to confide his plan to shake a finger, as well as a leg, in California.

He purposes to address gatherings on behalf of Democratic Gov. Edmund G. (Pat) Brown. He will come to a dramatic pause, then suddenly shake his finger madly as if under someone's nose. He will cry:

"As I said to Khrushchev—!"

THE WAY UDALL did it rehearsal is devastating. Others who have heard Nixon blast Brown for a do-nothing attitude on communism should roll in the aisles when they see Udall shake his finger and shout:

"As I said to Khrushchev—!"

"As I said to Khrushchev—"

may become the big catchphrase of the California gubernatorial campaign. If it comes the belly laugh I think it will, Nixon may find it expedient to revise the speech he tried out the other day in a Constitution Day ceremony at Chico State College in Chico, Calif.

The Republican candidate declared that a fighting-style anti-Communist speech "takes fire" with campaign audiences now.

He may find it isn't a fire will strike, but a funny one.

It's going to be a hilarious campaign for everybody except the Nixonites if Californians begin shaking their fingers under each other's noses.

"As I said to Khrushchev—!"

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